

Safe handling of chicks

The intestinal tracts of all mammals (including humans) and birds have various types of bacteria as part of their natural intestinal micro flora. There are many opportunities (such as pets, playmates, etc.) for young children to be exposed to these bacteria. Some types of bacteria may cause disease in susceptible humans. When dealing with animals in any situation personal hygiene is important. This is also true when conducting a chick incubation and hatching project. Here are some reminders of proper hygiene practices.

Hand washing is necessary to reduce any risk of bacterial infections. Wash your hands after coming in contact with any animals, birds or eggs. Proper hand washing techniques should be taught to insure the health of the students.

- Use **soap** and warm **running water**
- **Rub** your hands vigorously with soap and water for 20 seconds (about the time it takes your students to sing the Alphabet song)
- **Wash** the back of hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails
- **Rinse** well
- **Dry** thoroughly with a paper towel
- **Turn off** water faucets with an elbow or paper towel

If there is no access to running water, anti-bacterial hand sanitizers or wipes should be used. A variety of anti-bacterial lotions and hand sanitizers and wipes are available at most grocery, drug and department stores. Read the labels and select products that state they have a kill rate of 99% or greater for bacteria on contact. Wash hands properly as described above as soon as possible.

Supervise children when handling birds or animals:

- Do not allow children to nuzzle or kiss animals, chicks and ducklings
- Do not allow children to touch their mouths or eyes with their hands during or after handling animals and birds prior to hand washing
- Do not allow children to eat and drink before washing their hands thoroughly.

There are other things that can be done to reduce the risk of exposure of bacteria:

- Always clean and sanitize the incubator prior to incubating eggs
- Only set clean eggs from a reliable source
- In order to prevent the potential transmission of bacteria from adults and children to the chicks or eggs, hand washing prior to handling the eggs or birds is recommended.
- Always thoroughly clean any surfaces that have been contaminated with animal feces
- Clean and sanitize the incubator immediately after use and properly dispose of the shells and eggs that do not hatch